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CHOICES

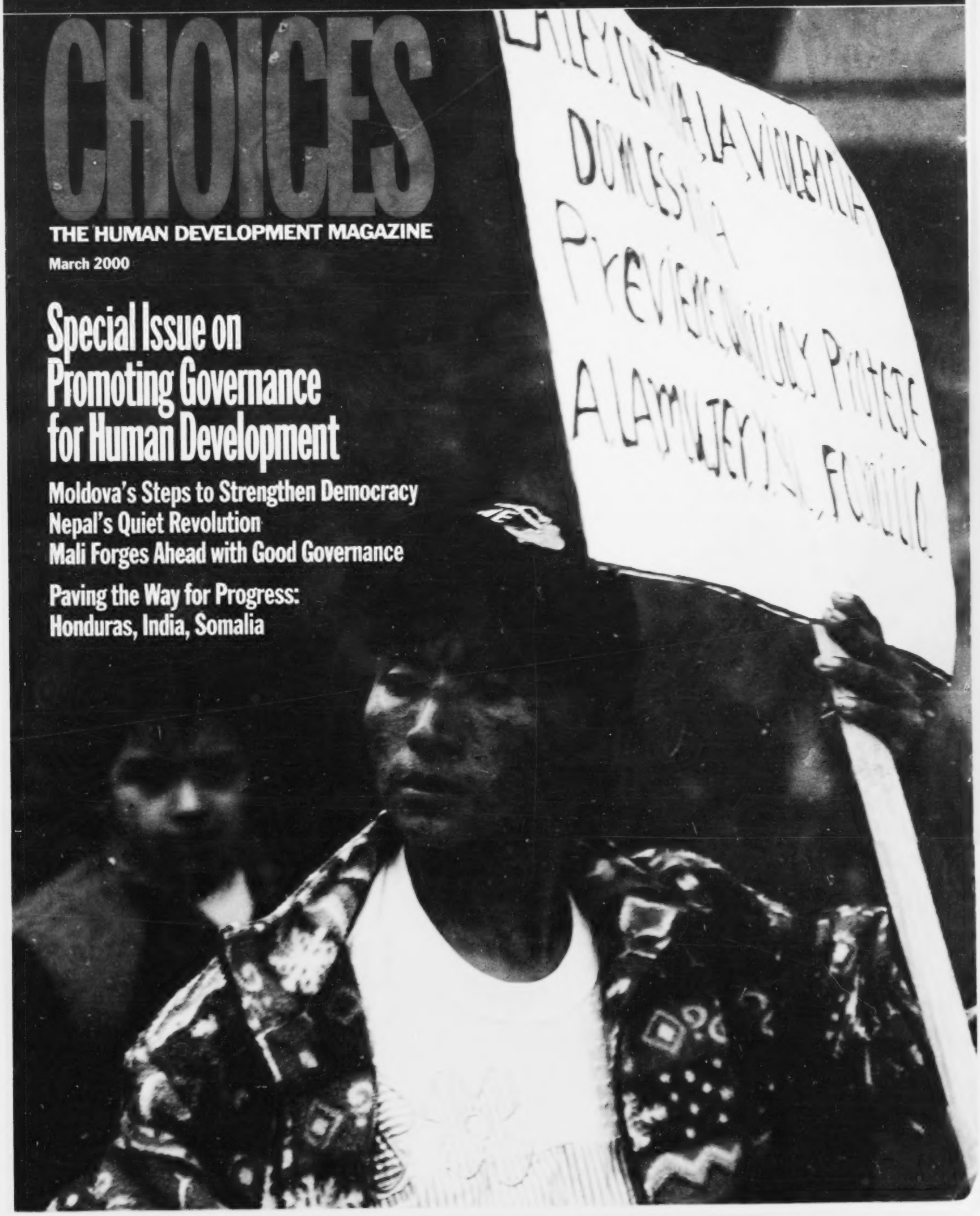
THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

March 2000

Special Issue on Promoting Governance for Human Development

Moldova's Steps to Strengthen Democracy
Nepal's Quiet Revolution
Mali Forges Ahead with Good Governance

Paving the Way for Progress:
Honduras, India, Somalia



FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

In the Kaniogo commune of Mali, Mamadou Traoré, the first democratically elected mayor, says that during the election campaign voters were most interested in his abilities to improve their living standards and provide basic services. His job now is to create a sense of unity among the villages and improve health, education and food self-sufficiency.

In a municipality in Honduras, another mayor consults with his constituents about their priorities. People tell him they want to protect the watershed, attract tourism to the region and build an emergency room in the hospital. He undertakes to get all this done with their help.

These are just some of the changes sweeping through developing countries that have initiated programmes to improve governance and reduce poverty. Such programmes bring about positive change in the lives of the poor, promote respect for human rights and give citizens a chance to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been instrumental in supporting such initiatives and working with civil society, bilateral and multilateral agencies, and most important of all, its programme countries. Between 1992 and 1998, at the request of national governments, UNDP committed 50 percent of its resources to programmes promoting improved governance.

In July of last year, a new Administrator, Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, took the helm of UNDP. His Business Plans for the organization for 2000-2003 cite the rise in demand for governance programmes, as well as the growing recognition by developing countries of a strong link between sound governance and human development. While the word "governance" has raised concern among some constituencies, difficulties with the label should not obscure the growing demand for services in this area. At the recent 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly no fewer than 104 delegations referred to the importance of governance in their opening statements. As an organization sensitive to developing country needs, UNDP is responding to these expressions by ensuring that it can meet the growing demand at the field level for policy dialogue and institutional development.

Promoting constructive dialogue was at the heart of the UNDP conference on "The Media and the Image of Africa" held in Bamako, Mali last December. The conference was intended to encourage more balanced and objective reporting of Africa in the international media. By highlighting country success stories as well as exposing policies that do not work, the media can play a major role in encouraging governments to devise policies and activities that address the needs of their people.

Attended by some 60 journalists from major print and broadcast media, the conference explored candidly the impact of the media's reporting on Africa and the way the continent is perceived. Participants looked at how articles about Africa affect development efforts on the continent and examined the significance of such stories in the fight against poverty and in the promotion of good governance. Most agreed that a better dialogue between African journalists and their international counterparts would result in a more balanced coverage of African events.

The Mali conference demonstrated how organizations such as UNDP can help to improve global understanding of the accomplishments and needs of developing countries. In a rapidly integrating world, partnerships with the media, the private sector, civil society and donor countries, have become increasingly important to the United Nations. They represent creative ways of working with and engaging the outside world. UNDP intends to expand its partnerships and play more of a catalytic, brokering role for developing countries. This will require the development of learning networks, the sharing of best practices, and an even greater commitment to performance and results.

This issue of CHOICES is devoted to the many aspects of good governance and how they relate to human development. From Mali to Moldova, journalists visited programmes and wrote about how, in partnership with national governments, UNDP is supporting initiatives on administrative decentralization, community participation, judicial reform and institution building.

Djibril Diallo interviews a woman from the Tuareg tribe in Timbuktu, Mali.

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CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

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COMMENTARY

MARK MALLOCH BROWN

GOVERNANCE: A BEDROCK OF DEVELOPMENT

The challenge before us is huge. In 1995 at the Copenhagen Social Summit, the international community committed to reducing by half the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. This summer the United Nations General Assembly will review the progress made since then. Unfortunately, what they are likely to find is that progress has been negligible.

After five years, and little to show, we must all ask how we can do a better job. The ultimate responsibility for reducing poverty lies with the governments who represent their people. And it is these governments that must adopt policies and, along with civil society and the private sector, build institutions that will allow their nations and their people to progress.

But there is also a wider responsibility and we saw this manifested in Copenhagen, where countries not only resolved to reduce poverty within their borders, but where richer nations also committed to help developing countries meet their poverty-reduction goals. While this so far has yielded little result, there is evidence of a renewed sense of commitment around the world to the plight of developing countries. The recent success with regard to debt relief is a major breakthrough. And there is a growing realization that a healthy and prosperous global economy requires a higher degree of equity and inclusion: that we cannot afford to allow as much as one-quarter of the world's population to live excluded in a confined world of poverty and hopelessness.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a central role in international efforts to aid developing countries. As a coordinator of international development aid, and as a partner to other development agencies as well as non-governmental organizations and private sector enterprises, UNDP works closely with developing countries to channel resources and expertise in support of their development goals.

We also provide much of our own resources and expertise to support programme country initiatives in the area of governance. As a trusted development partner, UNDP is helping more and more countries to develop appropriate policies and institutions, often around sensitive issues intimately bound up with national and local circumstances. As a truly multilateral and impartial organization, countries around the world trust UNDP, where they might not trust other outsiders, to support them in sensitive processes of political and economic transformation.

Governance is recognized as a bedrock issue of development: without transparent and accountable institutions and the capacity to develop the policies and laws to enable a country to manage its markets and its political life in an open but just way, development is not sustainable.

But the very power and inevitability of the idea also makes the concept of governance controversial. And we are often faced with the question of "governance on whose terms?" Is there only one "right" way to design democratic institutions or will the pace and direction of their evolution be determined by existing cultural and political conditions? The answer is the latter, because otherwise the institutions and policy frameworks will not be sustainable and, by logical extension, nor will development.

However, it is clear that whether a nation succeeds or fails in its efforts to reduce poverty, or whether it attempts to do so at all, is closely related to the character or quality of its governance. A nation where the poor have a voice in their government, where they can effectively demand that their interests are considered and where they can participate in the planning and implementation of policies aimed at improving their circumstances, such a nation is more likely to invest in human development, and thus succeed in reducing poverty.

With open democratic institutions allowing full participation in political affairs and human rights protections guaranteeing the right to speak and assemble, and obviously, to dissent, a government will ensure a higher degree of popular commitment to its policies. With such basic rights ensured and well-functioning governance institutions that are transparent and accountable to the people, there will be a higher degree of inclusion and, consequently, less alienation and cause for violent dissent.

It is also essential that a nation develops a legal and regulatory framework which not only protects fundamental human rights, but also ensures a sense of security and predictability in commercial affairs. The rule of law, including due process and access to justice for all, must be enforced by an independent judiciary and well-functioning law enforcement institution.

Beyond the hardware of governance—institutions and legal frameworks—governments must get their software right. This is perhaps the trickiest business, as an examination of all nations' government policy making would attest to. Often policies based on the best of intentions will prove counterproductive. And with the forces of globalization bearing down on governments from above, and civil society increasingly bearing up from below, even the strongest of governments are showing signs of stress.

UNDP is increasingly providing support to developing countries at this upstream level. It will provide policy advice and support to governments on how best to address the issues before them—from trade, to human rights, to environmental protection. And at all times, we will ensure that our policy advice is based on local needs and interests. Our agenda is the developing country's agenda; and that is why we can take on sensitive issues of change that others often cannot. ■

Mark Malloch Brown is the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

Making Government Work for Poor People

As the UK Minister for International Development, I have set myself the task of focusing the United Kingdom's development programme on the systematic reduction of poverty and support for sustainable development. This means refocusing our bilateral programme but also trying to persuade the whole international development system—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Regional Development Banks, donor countries and UN agencies—to focus more effectively on poverty reduction. Together we spend US$50 billion per annum and employ vast numbers of people. But the system is less effective than it should be. We need to measure our effectiveness by focusing on outputs, not inputs, and we should support government and civil society in developing countries to improve their own economic and social administration instead of running a massive number of individual projects. My view is that we should *all* focus on delivering the International Development Targets for which our governments voted at the great UN Conferences of the 1990s. This gives us the basis for our collaboration and for measuring progress.

The targets include: A billion people being lifted out of poverty by 2015. All children in quality primary education. Major improvements in health care and child and maternal survival. They are tough but achievable, if we get serious and more effective.

In order to achieve the International Development Targets, developing countries need effective government systems. They need good economic management and good management of public money. Without political systems which give a voice to the poor, countries will be less well placed to deal with conflict, root out the scourge of corruption and ensure efficient provision of essential public services for all.

We have learned some very important lessons about the balance between state and markets needed to produce pro-poor economic growth and the investment in health, education, water and sanitation that people need in order to thrive. Too much state gives us economic collapse and corruption—too much market, gross inequality and instability. Thus getting governance right is absolutely key to creating the conditions necessary to enable each country to meet the poverty targets. We now have more democracy across the world than we have ever had in human history. We need to make sure it works for people, particularly poor people.

We have in my Department been working on a series of papers, which try to set out what action is needed to meet the International Development Targets. The consultation paper on governance will be issued shortly. It will suggest that there are seven key capabilities that states need to ensure that government works for poor people. These are to:

- Provide *macro-economic stability* to facilitate private sector investment and trade (so as to promote pro-poor growth);
- *Raise resources* and to plan and account for their use;
- Operate *political systems which provide opportunities to all people*, including poor and disadvantaged people and civil society in general, to organize and influence state policy and practice;
- Guarantee the equitable and universal *provision of effective basic services;*
- *Ensure personal safety and security* in communities, with access to justice for all;
- *Manage national security accountably* and resolve differences between communities before they develop into violent conflicts; and
- Promote *honest and accountable government* that can combat corruption.

The consultation paper will examine some of the challenges we face in achieving these key capabilities. It does not of course have all of the answers, not least because improving government should be "work in progress" in all countries. There is no perfect system—all are capable of improvement, but there is no doubt that weak, ineffective, corrupt or oppressive government holds back development and prolongs inequality and poverty.

It is for this reason that, over the past decade or so, all the major development agencies have increasingly focused on supporting developing country efforts to put in place effective government systems that enable them to reduce poverty and improve the lives of their people.

I welcome the commitment by Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to refocus its activities on areas where it can have a real impact on poverty elimination and where the organization can demonstrate results. I am, however, a little worried that governance covers such a massive range of issues and the reforms needed, for example, to help put in place an effective education, health or policing system require major resource transfers to carry them forward. It is widely agreed that UNDP in the past has been less effective than it might be because it organized large numbers of projects that left little general impact.

I fear that a general focus on governance will risk the same outcome. My own view is that the core role for UNDP is the better coordination of the UN development effort in each country. With UNDP holding the ring and helping government and civil society put in place poverty strategies that will lead to the achievement of the International Development Targets and around which World Bank, IMF and donor support will be coordinated. This is in my view one crucial aspect of governance which is currently weak and to which UNDP's mandate, experience and particular moral authority make it especially suited.

I believe that there is an enormous potential in the expertise, commitment and energy of the 30,000 UN staff involved in work on international development. But I am convinced that the UN's development impact is well below its potential. The UN has unrivalled authority and legitimacy in developing countries and its performance must be strengthened. I believe that UNDP has a crucial role to play in coordinating the UN system's development efforts. By helping to ensure that the efforts of the various UN agencies are complementary, coherent and focused, UNDP has the potential to significantly improve the performance and effectiveness of the UN development effort and the UN's contribution towards the International Development Targets. ■

Clare Short,
UK International Development Secretary.

GOOD GOVERNANCE
A PATH TO POVERTY ERADICATION

By G. Shabbir Cheema

Celebrating the peace accord in Guatemala, May 1997.

Governance is the set of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages economic, political and social processes at all levels through interaction among the government, civil society and private sector. It is the way in which a society achieves mutual understanding, agreement and action. Governance comprises the mechanisms and processes through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. It is, in other words, the framework of rules, institutions and practices that sets limits and provides incentives for individuals, organizations and businesses.

Governance is a universal phenomenon in any society, but it may or may not lead a society to human development. This is why the concept of "governance for human development" is needed. At the very heart of good or sound governance operates an increasingly universal set of generative principles, including participation, equity, sustainability, transparency, effectiveness and the rule of law. Governance must be rooted in these fundamental principles to move a society toward increased levels of human development including poverty eradication, environmental protection and regeneration, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods.

Over the past four years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been clarifying its own concepts and operational strategies in support of good governance. In 1996 UNDP held a global workshop at the United Nations in which 60 representatives of central and local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, academia and UNDP staff brainstormed on the characteristics, roles, institutional forms and strategic priorities for promoting good governance.

This workshop led to a policy paper—Governance for Sustainable Human Development—which was approved by UNDP's Executive Committee, published and widely disseminated in January 1997. In July of the same year, UNDP convened the first-ever global conference on governance—the International Conference on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity; it was chaired by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Twelve hundred people attended the three-day event, including ministers, parliamentarians, mayors and representatives of NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies and the private sector.

Between 1992 and 1998, UNDP allocated US$5 billion, or 50 percent of its resources, to programmes promoting political, economic and social governance. Of this $5 billion, 53 percent went to six areas of good governance: promoting public sector reform; strengthening gov-

erning institutions (judiciary, elections, parliaments and human rights); governance in special circumstances; support to decentralization and local governance; leadership development; and enhancing democratization and political empowerment of the poor through strengthening civil society organizations.

In the same period, programmes supporting public resource management (the other major category of governance) received 47 percent of total resources for governance programming. This includes 40 percent to macro-economic management and seven percent to aid coordination.

Even though the largest allocations in this seven-year period were made to macro-economic management and public sector reform, the analysis of trends shows that other types of governance programmes are increasingly being requested by developing countries. From 1992 to 1998, the highest percentage changes in governance programming were for strengthening democratic institutions (up tenfold), promoting decentralization and local governance (up five-fold), building capacities of civil society organizations (up fourfold) and supporting the rebuilding of governance in crisis countries (up threefold). These are growth areas for UNDP.

UNDP and Governance

At the end of 1999, UNDP's strategy on governance for human development—updated in the three workshops held on political, economic and social governance—is clear. UNDP will support policy advice and institutional development focused on poverty eradication, environmental improvement and gender equity.

The priority entry points for UNDP interventions in governance are support to parliamentary and electoral reform; human rights and judicial reform; decentralization and local governance; civil society organizations; public and private sector management (including trade and debt relief, development coordination, transparency and accountability and civil service reform) and governance in crisis and post-crisis countries.

In each of these areas of support, UN will offer its products and services. It focus more on providing state-of-the policy advice and facilitate policy dia and advocacy involving representativ the various governance actors (state, society and private sector) at the nati regional and global levels. It will com to support the development of capac of national and local institutions of g ernment, civil society and the private sector using the entry points of the in vidual, the organization and the syste

UNDP will also continue to test nati policy options at the regional and loc levels to ensure operational linkages between upstream and downstream. it will step-up its assistance to develop countries in mobilizing and managing resources.

In doing all of this UNDP will work t ensure that its governance programme continue to be pr poor, pro-women and pro-environ- ment, make instit tional developmen visible and link pr ect interventions policy reform. It a needs to achieve greater results and measure them aga corporate indicato strengthen intern capacities in gover nance (especially a the country level), strengthen knowl- edge management systems and build organizational partne ships inside and outside the UN system

Though the relationship between gover nance and poverty eradication is compl and multifaceted, governance is the pri- mary means through which to achieve poverty eradication and other human development goals. If developing coun- tries improve their macroeconomic poli cies and their own institutions and processes of governance, and if UNDP supports good governance in the ways implied above, then we will see the prac cal linkages between governance and th eradication of poverty. ■

G. Shabbir Cheema is Director of the Management Development and Governa Division, UNDP.

WORKSHOP ON GOVERNANCE FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: UNDP AND CIVIL SOCIETY

In San Salvador, El Salvador, from 9 to 10 December 1999, senior UNDP staff and 20 representatives from civil society gathered for the last of three UNDP workshops on the theme of governance. The workshop was a watershed event in shaping the context and content of UNDP's engagement with civil society and will help chart future partnerships between UNDP and civil society organizations (CSOs) over a range of substantive issues. Its driving questions were, "What is UNDP's unique and enabling role in promoting a strong civil society in developing countries, and how can the organization become a more responsive and strategic partner to civil society?"

Left to right: Maria Eugenia Brizuela de Avila, Minister of Foreign Affairs, El Salvador, Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator and Elena Martinez, Director, Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The timing of this workshop, in the wake of the Seattle World Trade Organization demonstrations, was a vivid reminder of how powerfully civil society has ushered in a new era of "people's diplomacy," one that demands transparency and accountability and full participation through a creative mix of outreach strategies and media technology.

The workshop confirmed that because of its mandate and human development policy work, UNDP is still the preferred multilateral partner of a wide range of CSOs. This implies that UNDP must continue to address questions of how a society organizes itself to ensure equality of opportunity, equity and sustainability of resources for all its citizens. And it means that UNDP should provide space for crucial alternative perspectives on issues relating to globalization, particularly in the areas of debt, finance and trade.

The workshop also confirmed that UNDP has a multifaceted role to play in building a strong civil society in developing countries through concrete actions. Among other things, UNDP can build broad-based alliances among government, donors and civil society in an effort to promote good governance and human development; jointly identify advocacy issues and mobilize a broad-based constituency using information technology; and create an enabling legal and regulatory environment for a vibrant civil society while ensuring the inclusion of civil society in key legislative processes.

At the close of the workshop, UNDP Administrator, Mark Malloch Brown, noted that the organization's partnerships with civil society are going to be "as important as its partnerships with governments in shaping the future of development." To strengthen these partnerships, the Administrator committed UNDP to a number of new initiatives, including the creation of a UNDP/CSO Committee; the establishment of an information disclosure policy with mechanisms for tracking implementation; the building of partnerships around jointly identified emerging issues in areas of relatively new engagement for UNDP (e.g., globalization, human rights, trade and debt); and the documentation of best practices of UNDP's engagement with civil society.

The workshop marked the beginning of UNDP's move away from working for civil society toward working with civil society. Perhaps the atmosphere at the end of the workshop was best summed up by Martin Khor, Director of the Third World Network, when he said, "at the end [of the workshop], you could not tell who was civil society and who was UNDP." ■

INTERVIEW

ABDOULIE JANNEH

By Djibril Diallo

When Mark Malloch Brown joined the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as Administrator on 1 July 1999, he set up a Transition Team and appointed Mr. Abdoulie Janneh to head it. The team was established to select strategic management objectives for UNDP and to identify and remove impediments to progress. It sought the views of hundreds of UNDP colleagues, programme and donor countries, and partners in the field and published a report of its findings. In this interview for CHOICES, Mr. Janneh discusses the role of UNDP in the new millennium. Mr. Janneh served as UNDP Resident Representative and Resident Coordinator in Ghana and is currently the Officer-in-Charge of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

The Transition Team that you chaired attempted to capture the picture of where UNDP stands today and the challenges it faces in preparing for the new millennium. What were the major findings of the team's report?

First, developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, are confronted with a world environment that is changing fast due to: globalization, the information technology revolution, post-cold war realignment, and the growing role of markets—particularly international capital markets—in speeding up the world's economic integration. While all these changes affect all countries, developing countries are particularly vulnerable.

Second, with official development assistance in decline, we also have witnessed a clear emphasis on funding bilateral programmes and an overall shift away from multilateral activities such as those carried out by UNDP. Third, UNDP itself needs to adapt to, and anticipate, this rapidly changing and competitive external environment in order to respond effectively and pertinently to the needs of its country clients. UNDP's current funding crisis is one indication that it has not been adapting fast enough to the changing environment.

The Business Plans for 2000-2003 envision a UNDP that will concentrate on governance. This includes providing developing countries with policy advice, institution building and other upstream services. How will this focus enable UNDP to contribute to human development and poverty eradication? What will be the impact at the grassroots level?

Let me emphasize that UNDP's first and foremost focus is on human development and poverty eradication. There will not be any shift in its mandate. This was made clear in the Transition Team's report. We see governance not as an end in itself, but as a means of helping our client country governments achieve their human development and poverty eradication goals. In this context, governance provides a framework through which UNDP can support activities in the areas of policy, institutional development and capacity building. As such, governance will have a positive impact at the grassroots level, as it will emphasize inclusiveness, ownership and meaningful participation of all actors of civil society.

How would the envisioned changes at UNDP help developing countries attract more resources to aid their development and UNDP to mobilize more funding for its work?

We believe that the changes we are puting in place now will be attractive to our partners and will go a long way in raising resources for UNDP. First, the new UNDP will have both a tighter policy focus and new mechanisms to ensure that policy work and programme activities support each other. Second, in tandem with the policy focus, an effort is under way to enhance the organization's human resource management capacity to attract, develop and retain talent and invest heavily in people; to create a culture of accountability in which performance is measured; and to establish new strategic partnerships, all with the common goal to achieve the US$1.1 billion target in voluntary contributions established by UNDP's Multi-Year Funding Framework.

Developing strategic partnerships is another focus of the Business Plans. How do you see this evolving?

As outlined in the Business Plans, we see partnership not primarily as a dimension of external relations, but as a critical component of the realignment of our sources of support, goals and capacities; a precondition for more effective development cooperation; and a crucial platform to mobilize resources. This new strategic partnership encompasses not only traditional institutions, such the World Bank, but other groups also, such as the private sector (for example the NetAid joint project with Cisco Systems), and civil society organizations.

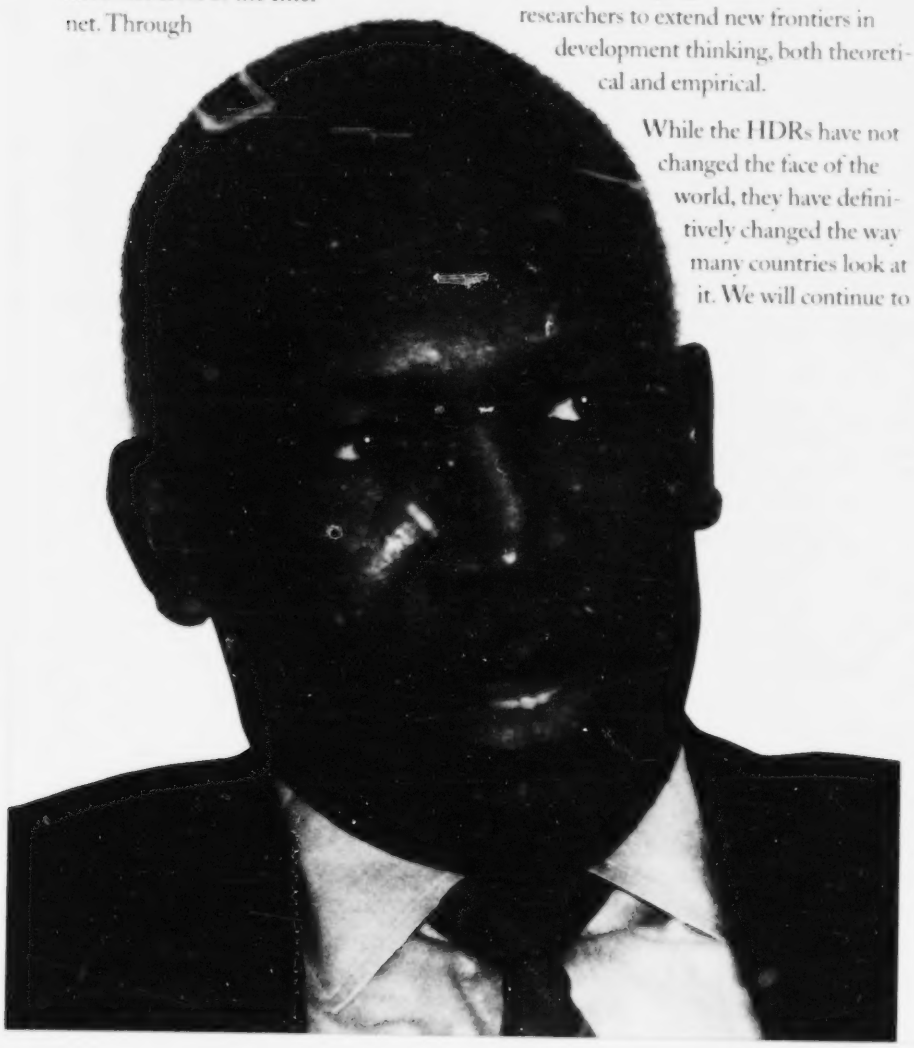
In what way can UNDP be better geared to meet the needs of developing countries in a rapidly changing world where globalization and new technologies make some countries feel that they are being left out? What are UNDP's

strengths when it comes to helping in post-conflict countries and emergency situations?

All of these issues point to the quality of governance at the national level. This is true because the challenge for countries in pursuit of growth and development is how to manage in an increasingly "wired" and globalized world economy. Globalization has tended to shrink national sovereign policy autonomy. Some of the issues, which heretofore have fallen within the purview of national governments, are now addressed through concerted actions at the regional or global level. Again, as an impartial and multilateral partner to its client countries, UNDP can capitalize on its presence in 133 countries and on its coordination responsibilities to become a leading partner for governance work. This is applicable to post-conflict countries as well as emergency situations.

How important do you think information technology is in UNDP's work in poverty elimination, good governance and helping in post-conflict and emergency situations?

Knowledge is one of the keys to development, and information technology capacity is the heart of knowledge sharing. UNDP can play a crucial role in helping countries access and utilize the unparalleled resources of the Internet. Through NetAid, UNDP has the unique opportunity to manage what we hope will become the world's premier portal on development issues.



The Business Plans emphasize the importance of UNDP's annual Human Development Report (HDR) and encourage similar works at the national level. What impact has the HDR had on developing countries? What are the organization's plans for advocacy for human development at the global level?

The global Human Development Reports have achieved quite a lot. The HDR is an independent report commissioned by UNDP and is the product of a selected team of leading scholars, development practitioners and members of the Human Development Report Office (HDRO).

The report first launched the human development concept 10 years ago. It also introduced the human development indicators with which countries can compare themselves with the rest of the world.

The HDR contributes to international development debates and dialogues, not only in analytical areas but also on policy issues. It provides an excellent advocacy tool to non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society, while encouraging academics and researchers to extend new frontiers in development thinking, both theoretical and empirical.

While the HDRs have not changed the face of the world, they have definitively changed the way many countries look at it. We will continue to support the HDRO as an autonomous unit of UNDP. I believe that independence is one of the strengths of the HDRO.

"Let me emphasize that UNDP's first and foremost focus is on human development and poverty eradication."

Among the major contributions of the global HDRs is the promotion of National Human Development Reports (NHDRs). In 1991, there were pilot attempts to produce four NHDRs—in Bangladesh, Colombia, Ghana and Pakistan. Today, nearly 120 countries have produced more than 250 NHDRs, in addition to nine regional reports. Some countries have produced NHDRs on a regular basis for more than five years.

Overall, the achievements of the NHDRs are quite impressive. They are being used as policy guides for planners and policy makers in different countries (for example, the first NHDR in Pakistan significantly influenced the Social Action Plan of that country; in Egypt, the NHDR human indicators have changed the country's budgetary allocations).

The reports are also being used as strong advocacy tools by institutions of civil society, and serve as important repositories of country-level data and information, as well as reference books in various universities and other educational institutions. For the future, we intend to raise the visibility, quality and standards of NHDRs even higher.

What are UNDP's two main objectives for the millennium?

Our first objective is to become a focused and results-based organization that provides effective and relevant support to programme countries in their efforts to undertake the necessary reforms in their fight against poverty. This support will be in the areas of policy dialogue, institutional development, capacity building and resources mobilization. Our second, at the global level, is to become a stronger and more effective voice that speaks for the poor and for the policies and institutions that will put an end to poverty. ■

MALI

By Paul Melly

Kaniogo, Mali—Mamadou Traoré certainly has a job on his hands. In September 1999 he became the first democratically elected mayor of the commune of Kaniogo, in southwestern Mali. Now he has to show that democracy at the grassroots can have real meaning—deliver better services and more dynamic development—than the old top-down system of government inherited from the days of the authoritarian one-party state.

Largely arid, and landlocked, Mali is one of the poorest countries in Africa. But since 1991 it has enjoyed political freedom, under a multi-party democratic system, and attracted interest from international donors.

Over the past three years, Mali has implemented one of the most far-reaching programmes of political and administrative decentralization in Africa, with the aim of returning real decision-making power to local communities. The final building block of the new system was put in place in June 1999, with the election of local councils and mayors for the small rural communes where most Malians still live.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been closely associated with the design and implementation of the decentralization scheme and is one of the main donors, contributing US$2.8 million through a sectoral programme.

Another key donor is Germany, which by November 1999 had disbursed more than $2 million of a promised $7.75 million. Additional contributions are being made by the European Union, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the US Agency for International Development, and at least two other United Nations agencies—the United Nations Capital Development Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The government, supported by UNDP, is organizing a donor roundtable focused on decentralization, scheduled for this year, in Bamako, the capital. UNDP believes that more effective and respon-

FORGES AHEAD WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE

able road link to Bamako, the area is even able to produce fresh green beans for export to international markets.

But although relatively well-off in Malian terms, Kaniogo still faces huge challenges if it is to achieve sustainable long-term improvements in standards of living and the provision of primary services, such as health care and education. And it is these basic issues that were at the heart of last year's election campaign.

"I was chosen as the mayoral nominee by fellow ADEMA party candidates because of my previous experience and training as a village activist for Acodep," Mayor Traoré points out. (Acodep is a partly UNDP-financed government programme in support of local development.)

Improving health and education

The mayor explains that the dominant issues of the election campaign were basic development concerns: "Creating a sense of unity among villages and improving health, education and food

tional development agencies. Initiative, contacts and goodwill are crucial.

Traoré cites the example of education in his own village, Salamalé. "Each school teacher is allocated a field on which to grow food, and each year the other members of the community come with their oxen to plough it. All the children passed the primary school graduation examination last year. People showed their gratitude by providing a lot of extra help in the teachers' fields."

Gradually word of this local support and enthusiasm spread through the education faculty in Bamako, encouraging newly-qualified teachers to seek posts in the Salamalé area.

Enthusiasm for education in Kaniogo is all too evident. Acodep now supports a special school in the village of Teguè Coro for older children—aged nine to 15—who missed out on primary education because their families could not spare them from the fields. ▶

GOOD GOVERNANCE
MALI

sive government at the local level will benefit economic development and social programmes. It sees a close link between the quality of governance and progress in alleviating poverty.

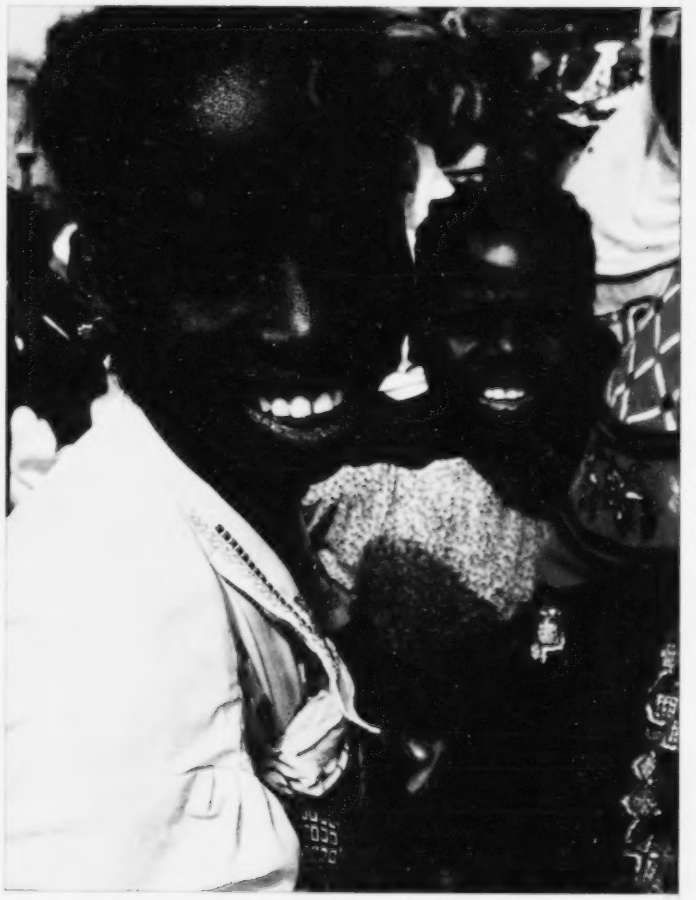
"It is of course vitally important for the new system to deliver not only the satisfaction of local empowerment, but also the goods," says Tore Rose, UNDP's Resident Representative in Mali. "One can hope that such goods will be more beneficial and durable than those which came through the old top-down approach."

The success of this strategy is now being put to the test countrywide, in communities such as Kaniogo. It's 11 villages lie in the fertile upper valley of the river Niger, near the Guinean border. With a reason-

self-sufficiency."

"There are only two health centres and three dispensaries to service a population of more than 11,000 people—malaria, cholera, polio and dehydration are common problems. Most villages do have primary schools, but teachers are in short supply and must often look after two classes at once. Some classes have 120 children," says Traoré.

The mayor has only limited power and money at his disposal and his ability to tackle Kaniogo's problems will depend largely on his skill in securing the support of authorities further up the administrative chain, notably the central government delegate in the district capital, Kangaba, and local and interna-



Improving education for children is a primary concern among villagers.

Children attend the school during the six months of the year when there is less farming work to do. Committed and more mature, they are able to cover the basic primary syllabus—including reading, arithmetic, farming and vocational training—in four years, instead of the usual six.

The programme of decentralization now being implemented all across Mali has the potential to release energy and ideas at the local and regional level, giving people a more direct say in the development of their communities. But if the programme is to be genuinely effective, disadvantaged areas will need extra support.

More than 1,000 kilometres northeast of Kaniogo is Timbuktu—undoubtedly among the most famous of West Africa's cities, but also among the most isolated. This ancient centre of trans-Saharan trade and Islamic learning is located at the meeting point of the desert and the seasonally lush rice paddies of the vast inland delta of the Niger river; but during the wet season, roads through the region are often impassable.

Although tourism and the activities of myriad non-governmental organizations have brought a scattering of foreign spending power to the local economy, extreme poverty remains widespread. Recent years have seen UNDP and other donors step up their efforts to ease these pressures—for example, through support for irrigated farming schemes and income-generating projects at the grassroots level. But of course expenditure by government, at the commune, district, regional or national level, will play a key role.

Deciding how money is spent

Commune councils have a range of revenue raising powers, explains the high commissioner of Timbuktu, Lieutenant Colonel Mahamadou Maiga, "Local authorities set the rates for the taxes, which account for 80 percent of their expenditure. Taxes are levied on animals, weapons and people. And there are other local resources, such as site rents paid to market traders or stallholders on the quay at the port on the Niger river. Some 20 percent of the resources will come from central government and donors."

Back in Kaniogo, Mayor Traoré warns, "Villagers cannot afford to pay the taxes that I have the right to levy." But policy-makers in the government's Decentralization Mission, in Bamako, point out that the tax régime is already in place. And they believe people will actually be more inclined to make payments, now that their own locally elected representatives decide how the money is spent.

Almost everywhere, of course, the new mayors will need technical support from government specialists. Traoré warns that teething problems are inevitable, "We are the first mayors. There will be problems, because people don't understand decentralization."

Traoré trained in Bamako as a bookkeeper. But some of his fellow commune councillors are illiterate—although steps are being taken to deal with this challenge. In the Timbuktu area, newly elected local officials have been given training courses in how to set a basic annual budget.

"It will not be easy to meld modern notions of democracy with traditional authority structures," cautions UNDP's Rose. But he also points out that the recent reforms represent a return to pre-colonial Mali's past, when local communities had political control of their own affairs. ■

Paul Melly is assistant editor of the London newsletter Africa Analysis.

Birthing centre for women set up by UNDP in Marako, Mali.

PAVING THE WAY FOR

LA HONDURAS DEL SIGLO XXI, LA CONSTRUIREMOS HOMBRES Y MUJERES TRABAJANDO POR UN OBJETIVO COMUN. EN IGUALDAD DE OPORTUNIDADES.
EDUCACION Y SALUD PARA LA MUJER

PEOPLE POWER

La Paz, Honduras—It's early morning and fireworks blast off in the village square in front of the cathedral of La Paz in Honduras. It is the last day of the town's annual celebration in honour of its patron saint, the Virgen de Los Dolores, and Maria Carmen Rosales has taken to the streets. While other women from her Lenca tribe in the village of Marcala are still cleaning breakfast dishes, Rosales is marching with 60 other women towards a better future for Honduras and her village. She holds a placard which reads "Prevent Violence and Protect the Woman and her Family."

Rosales belongs to the Initiative of La Paz, an umbrella organization of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and involved in educating people about citizen participation. The Mayor of La Paz, Francisco Filiberto Isaula, leads the procession. "This is my first time marching," Rosales admits smiling shyly. ▶

Working at the local level

The march is only one part of the Decentralization and Citizen Participation Programme initiated by UNDP to strengthen citizen participation in the democratic process by encouraging the decentralization of basic social services and promoting community-driven strategies for local development. "We have always attacked the symptoms of the problem and not the problem itself," says Zoraida Mesa, UNDP's Resident Representative in Honduras, "If we want to bring human development to the people, we must also begin working at the local municipality level."

Mayor Isaula was voted into office in the 1997 elections. He is a member of the relatively new Unión Democratica Party which was formed in 1994. "UNDP is providing technical assistance that supports Isaula's effort to forge more flexible and effective policies through involving the citizens of La Paz in the political process," says Nydia Núñez, the project's chief technical adviser.

Isaula recently displayed the municipality's budget and expenditures on panels in the Town Hall. He's working with La Paz residents to consider strategies to protect the city's watershed, attract tourism to La Paz and secure funds to improve the emergency room at the hospital.

Change sweeps through Honduras

Approximately eight out of 10 rural resi-

Civilian volunteers draw up a master plan to restore the city centre of Santa Rosa de Copan.

ents live in poverty in Honduras. Few elieve that they have any say in making e decisions that affect their lives. Until e 1980s, Honduras was ruled strictly om the top down, with an all-powerful ilitary calling the shots behind the enes. Dictatorships, frequent changes in overnment, competing regimes and for-gn interventions all contributed towards olitical instability.

t things began to change, and in 1991 e Honduran Congress passed the Law Municipalities, giving more power local municipalities. In 1994, President rlos Roberto Reina came into office

and took the power away from the military and emphasized fiscal responsibility and public accountability. The Decentralization Commission was created by legislative decree.

"In 1996, UNDP began to set in motion the process of a dialogue between the community and the mayors of the country during the electoral campaign," says UNDP's Mesa. UNDP began working with leaders from all the different political parties in Honduras as they prepared for the 1997 elections, the first in which Honduran citizens could vote for their mayor directly, on a ballot separate from that of the president.

"We began working from the bottom up," explains Mesa. UNDP hoped to jump-start the process by providing technical support to local governments and working towards strengthening the institutions required for good governance. The process of decentralization had been under way in Honduras for barely three years and progress was slow. "The programmes that promote and encourage better governance aren't the easiest to manage," says Mesa.

In 1998, the next phase in the Decentralization and Citizen Participation programme was initiated by UNDP, in partnership with the Government of Sweden, with US$3 million for a four-year project to support decentralization and municipal development. The pilot programme is taking place in five municipalities of Honduras where civil participation is the strongest: Puerto Cortes, San Pedro Sula, Santa Rosa de Copan, La Paz and Tegucigalpa. "We knew that there it would have a better chance of taking hold, and so would be able to replicate it elsewhere," notes Mesa.

Making citizens out of residents

Santa Rosa de Copan, situated in the western highlands of Honduras, is perhaps a city better known for its cobble-stoned streets and cigars than for citizen participation. Here UNDP is helping Mayor Juan Carlos Elvir to restore the historical district, preserve the watershed and support the arts. These issues were chosen by the people, who hope to attract tourism and related income-generating activities to their city.

On a visit to the Barrio of San Martin, a community that clings to a hill just outside the city, Mayor Elvir sounds out the residents on a tax increase. This would help collect money to build schools, con-

struct a new sewage disposal system and build a dam over the Higuito River to provide drinking water for Copanecos into the next century.

"It's not an easy process to make citizens out of residents," Mayor Elvir says. In a country that's been ruled by the central government, he believes that empowering the people to make the decisions that affect their lives is a process of education. He takes the local government to the people and makes them partners in the decision-making process. UNDP helps by supporting such initiatives, which lead to the strengthening of local governments.

Doña Emilia Chavarria de Zaldivar is the treasurer of a project to restore the barrio of Santa Teresa. While inspecting the orderly arrangement of cobblestone work, she says, "The people united are dynamite." In this barrio, 50 residents decided to pave their barrio's roads themselves, in a partnership brokered with the municipality. They paid for the labour and the town supplied the materials, a civil engineer and equipment. Chavarria de Zaldivar kept track of money in her son's small notebook. "It means more when you do it yourself," she says.

On a weekday night, seven civil volunteers meet in the mayor's office to decide which architect will renovate the town's large covered marketplace. UNDP will provide both the technical and financial support for this endeavour. The technical support will flow through the decentralization and municipal development project, while UNDP will channel $110,000 to the project from the Government of the Netherlands. The municipality will pay the rest.

The civilian volunteers belong to the Commission to Rescue the Historic District and have drawn up a master plan to restore the city centre. They are working in partnership with the municipality, UNDP and the School for Anthropology of Tegucigalpa. "To know where you come from tells you where you can go," Elvir believes.

UNDP helped broker another collaboration between La Casa de la Cultura, the municipality and its citizens. The municipality pays for the materials for the restoration of the 125-year-old theatre, while the Rotary Club, the Copaneco Cultural Group, The Parents of Ballet, the Honduran Ministry of Culture and UNDP pay the rest. While workers restore walls of the building to what it

once was, Copanecos learn to play the marimba, French horn and dance ballet. "This is a good example of citizen participation," says Patricia Bueso, director of the lively centre.

It's a Tuesday night and things are buzzing in the theatre in La Casa de la Cultura. Artistic Director Sandra Herrera Dean leads students through a rehearsal of a play they shaped through improvisation.

Two puppets dance and interact with actors. One puppet asks the other puppet, "Who are you?" The second puppet answers, "Citizen Participation." The first puppet wavers, "The trouble is that I don't know you because you're still abstract..." Puppet Citizen Participation replies, "You don't know me because you haven't practiced me. Just wait and see."

It's clear that something dynamic is underway in Honduras. During the recent Ibero-American Summit held in Cuba, Carlos Flores, the President of Honduras, spoke of the importance of increasing citizen participation in the political process of his country as it becomes a part of the global economy. "The great challenge of today is to make a map of the future based on a new focus which is participatory and not imposing, of regional and international collaboration for human development," he said. ■

Stephenie Hollyman is a photojournalist whose work has appeared in Time *and* Stern. *Her work as a videojournalist has been broadcast by* CNN, CBS News *and* NHK Television.

(Top) Patricia Bueso, Director of La Casa de la Cultura discusses renovation plans with an engineer. (Below) Students at the centre rehearse a play with puppets.

NEPAL'S QUIET REVOLUTION

By Kunda Dixit

Nayagau, Nepal—Under a deep blue Himalayan sky, thickly forested hills, and terraces ablaze with yellow mustard fields, the village of Nayagau appears festive. Villagers have gathered for the inauguration of their own micro-hydro powerhouse, which channels water from a small stream into a turbine that generates five kilowatts of electricity, enough to light up 88 households at night and power a grain mill by day.

"At least I get to see an electric light before I die," says 77-year-old Juma Maya Humagain, holding her granddaughter, Deepa, on her lap. "And maybe the lives of my grandchildren will be brighter than mine."

The outside world's perception of Nepal swings between two extremes: one is of a tourist paradise, land of stupendous scenery, adventure sports and a unique blend of cultures. The other impression is of a poor country in the midst of a difficult transition to democracy. Actually, the reality of Nepal is somewhere in between.

Hydropower and tourism alone may help lift Nepal out of poverty. But here in Nayagau you see a third, more potent force: the power of local communities to organize, plan and work together to improve their living conditions. The powerhouse in Nayagau is a sign of the new "people power" revolution sweeping Nepal. The self-confidence and independence of villagers is a direct result of the country's 10-year-old democratic constitution that introduced decentralization and local self-governance, allowing people to take the decisions that affect their lives.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Norwegian government's NORAD have designed and financed initiatives like the Participatory District Development Programme (PDDP) and the Local Governance Programme, to take advantage of decentralization. UNDP alone has spent US$8.8 million over the past five years on the two projects supporting local governance.

"Given Nepal's topography, decentralization is the only way to govern the country," says Dr. Henning Karcher, UNDP's Resident Representative in Nepal. "Others have tried this approach before, but what is unique about Nepal is that a functioning

(Top) Women's cooperative group in Kusadevi.
(Below) Family tags buffalo's ears for insurance purposes.

decentralization legislation is linked to grassroots decision-making for development on a nationwide scale."

Unique synergy at the grassroots

To bring Nayagau's small hydropower scheme to life, PDDP built a unique synergy between village and district councils, which provided part of the investment. Nepal's Agriculture Development Bank granted the loan, and the Intermediate Technology Development Group designed and installed the power plant.

In Nayagau, and in many thousands of villages across Nepal, the result of five years of decentralized decison-making is there for everyone to see: community irrigation, increased farm productivity, including more milk, higher school enrolment, especially of girls, better-fed and healthier children.

Bhim Neupane is the twice-elected chairman of the village of Kusadevi, a market town down the mountain from Nayagau. He points to the thick forests of rhododendron and oak that drape the surrounding mountains. "When I was a child, most of these hills were barren," he says. "When a forest was government property, it didn't belong to anyone. When it was given back to the villagers to manage, they protected it." Walking the mountain trail down from Nayagau past villagers tending their water buffaloes and teachers returning from school, Neupane returns greetings with a broad smile. He asks the villagers about milk yield, explains how to get a sick relative to a health post, and relates the details of a savings scheme for the community.

Neupane has made democracy deliver development. When asked what he thinks was the most important ingredient for its success, he replies without hesitation: "The accountability of elected officials and local institutions. They will not vote for us again, unless I earn the total trust of the people, unless they believe that what I am doing benefits them, and makes their lives easier, and unless we show integrity and commitment."

The foundations of a new Nepal

All over Nepal, thousands of locally elected village officials like Bhim Neupane are laying the foundations for a strong democracy that may one day transform national politics as well. Neupane has made sure he also has a strong partnership with the district administration in nearby Dhulikhel. Together, they have mobilized local households to solve what villagers think are their own most pressing needs: more schools, better health posts, roads, irrigation, electricity and jobs so they do not need to migrate to towns.

With help from PDDP, other districts across Nepal have also discovered their own power. Local community organizations have started savings schemes from which members can borrow for personal needs. If the community wants to dig a new irrigation canal, or bring drinking water closer to home, or, as in the case of Nayagau, build a powerhouse, PDDP offers help from its Seed Grant Fund.

In Kusadevi, members of community groups convinced parents about the value of education and more children are going to school. Enrolment in Kusadevi is up from 60 percent five years ago to nearly 95 percent today. The United Nations Children's Fund has joined hands with PDDP to launch "decentralized planning for the child." Through that initiative, mothers are told about nutritious food, and children under three years are measured and weighed regularly to ensure that they are well fed. The proportion of undernourished children in the village has gone down to 40 percent since the programme began. This compares to the national average of 60 percent.

One of the most successful and unique initiatives in Kusadevi has been the community's own Livestock Insurance Scheme. Dairy milk has traditionally been the mainstay of the economy, but farmers could not afford better buffaloes or bear the risk of an expensive buffalo dying suddenly.

Sanunani Acharya has a well-groomed buffalo, Kali; it wears a metal earring with the number 0176—proof of being insured by the community for an annual premium of Rupees 2,000 ($23), which is roughly 10 percent of the market value of the animal.

Says Acharya: "Earlier we used to have to sell land or ornaments to buy a buffalo. If it died, we lost everything. This time, we got a loan from the community to buy Kali, and we have also insured her. At least these days I don't have sleepless nights."

If Kali dies, Sanunani Acharya will get 80 percent of the animal's insured value from the community insurance pool. The insurance scheme also provides for Kali's regular health check-ups and vaccinations. Half the water buffaloes in Kusadevi have been insured since the scheme was started this year.

Although farmers like Acharya have benefited, the scheme is still precarious. This monsoon season, six insured animals died and there was just enough money in the bank to pay off the owners. If there was a major epidemic, it could present a problem. Because he took an active part in the drive to insure buffaloes, Bhim Neupane jokes that he knows almost every buffalo in his village by its first name: "Around here, there is almost as much concern when a buffalo falls sick these days as when a villager falls sick."

Back in Kathmandu, UNDP Resident Representative Karcher has a map of Nepal spread out before him. "We have demonstrated that PDDP works beyond the pilot phase," he says. "Now we are building a coalition of donors to jointly go into the districts we haven't covered. In the districts in which we already operate, we will go into more villages." Participatory development and local governance programmes now operate in 340 villages within 50 districts in Nepal; they will soon be extended to 10 more districts, covering 80 percent of all districts in the kingdom. ■

Kunda Dixit is a director of the Panos Institute South Asia and co-publisher of Himal *magazine. He is based in Kathmandu.*

STEPS TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY

By Michael J. Jordan

Chisinau, Moldova—Anatol Dmitrievici Sherstinkov fought the system—and won. It is not so surprising, considering the passion and energy the 65-year-old inventor exudes. Smartly dressed in a blue suit that belies a modest US$11 monthly pension, Sherstinkov sits on the edge of his seat as he heatedly describes his long battle with Moldova's courts. A major firm bought his technology to monitor gas usage but, in early 1996, reneged on a contract that would have made Sherstinkov a very rich man.

In this ex-Soviet republic, judges ruled against him the first time around and again on appeal. In June 1999, however, aided by lawyers from the Centre for Human Rights (CHR), Sherstinkov won a second appeal. "I never would have won the case without the CHR," he says, from CHR's office in Moldova's capital, Chisinau. "Before, the judges were obviously unfair every step of the way. But with the CHR behind me, the judges couldn't dispute the facts."

Even more surprising than the judgment is that nowadays, Sherstinkov and fellow Moldovans are emboldened enough to fight the courts. In the old days, before the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, the deck was clearly stacked against the little guy.

Mr. Sherstinkov at home.

Introducing judicial reform

However, times are changing in tiny Moldova, thanks in part to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Between 1996 and 1999, the UNDP Governance and Democracy Programme allocated $3.4 million to reform Moldova's judiciary and public administration. The funds were provided by the Government of the Netherlands, which shared the cost of the governance and democracy projects.

In addition, in March 1997, UNDP allocated $179,000, to be spent over a 30-month period, to the CHR. An additional $100,000 was received from the Swedish government through the Regional Programme on Democracy, Government and Participation. UNDP also gave $464,000 for Moldova's first independent think tank, the Centre for Strategic Studies and Reform. The centre was also financed by a World Bank loan to the Government of Moldova.

During 40 years of communism, the centralized Soviet bureaucracy demanded subservience from Moldova's civil servants. So UNDP is helping to revamp governing institutions and train officials in the standards of pluralistic democracy, respect for human rights and observance of the rule of law. Without a conversion, Moldova's ostensible embrace of free markets and democracy may be merely cosmetic.

"Free markets in many cases are easier to create than the foundation for democracy," says Soren Tejno, UNDP's Resident Representative. "But without the institutional checks and balances, free markets become equivalent to a lack of control, and every man for himself."

The UNDP focus is on "institution and capacity-building," says Tejno. Foreign and local experts are working together to rebuild Moldova's legal infrastructure by drafting dozens of new laws. Some 350 judges, nearly 100 lawyers and prosecutors, and 350 officials in public administration have taken training, seminars and study trips abroad. And donated computer equipment and training have modernized administrative and communication channels.

With an eye to life after UNDP, there is also an emphasis on training Moldovans to become trainers themselves. UNDP graduates now conduct lectures at the Judicial Training Centre, the law faculty

at the Moldovan State University, and the Academy of Public Administration. UNDP participants learn not only about the European Convention on Human Rights, but also how to manoeuvre in an increasingly desperate economic situation.

Strengthening institutions

Moldova, which declared independence in 1991, ranks as the poorest country in Europe today. Sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, the landlocked population of 4.3 million is mostly rural and agricultural. The main products are wine and tobacco. The gross domestic product per capita is $410.

Amid the gloom, however, a glimmer of hope can be found. From judges to mayors, UNDP's clients have welcomed the democratic approach to governance. In ways big and small, these converts are slowly making their impact felt.

A case in point is Nicolae Timofte, a graduate of UNDP training. Timofte, former vice president of Moldova's Supreme Court, is now president of the fledgling National Court of Appeals, which was established in 1996 with UNDP assistance. The activities in the courtrooms of the court building in downtown Chisinau are nothing less than revolutionary, as under the old system trials were closed and judges were obliged to be members of the Communist Party. Presumed innocence did not exist, as the Party freely pronounced the guilt of enemies before evidence was produced.

Today, the individual gets priority; the judges, autonomy. Each citizen is guaranteed access to a public trial, within a "responsible time frame," before an "independent, impartial tribunal." Judges now have the authority to issue warrants—formerly the domain of state-controlled prosecutors—and the freedom to determine the time needed to try each case.

"When I first became a judge in 1976, I thought I'd be defending the right of the people," says Timofte, who spent a week studying the courts in the Netherlands as part of his training. "But I became disillusioned when I realized I was expected to promote the interests of the Communist Party.

Now I feel like I'm really a judge. A judge should be an independent thinker. And he must protect the rights of all citizens, not be pressed by anyone outside the court of law."

Moving towards good governance

Another aspect of changing the system is giving local leaders more autonomy. UNDP, in partnership with the Dutch Association of Municipalities (VNG), has instructed officials from half of Moldova's districts to look to themselves—not to the State—to solve their problems. They have participated in seminars on such topics as "How to Understand the Market Economy" and have been able to build networks with both foreign experts and public servants from around Moldova.

UNDP and VNG have also overseen key structural changes. One in particular fosters a crucial sense of autonomy. During Soviet times, the central government dictated how each district would spend its budget allocation. But now, local authorities have the power to decide how their share of the state budget ought to be spent. This forces them to first consider the needs of their community.

In one of two UNDP pilot projects, Anenii Noi, a bleak district 25 miles east of Chisinau, was "twinned" with the Dutch City of Apeldoorn. Anenii Noi leaders also traveled to the Netherlands for a three-week internship. The trip fired their imaginations. Soon after their return, they successfully outlined a comprehensive development strategy and reorganized the district Executive Committee to make better use of its human resources. They even planned to restructure the local education system and create new jobs.

But in 1998, the Anenii Noi district fell victim to new legislation that reduced the number of districts countrywide from 46 to nine. The entire administration was disbanded, but Anenii Noi officials say they're still devoted to reform. "Although you may not see vivid results today, the UNDP programme planted a seed that will reveal itself later," said Anenii Noi's Anatol Barbarosie, chairman of the now-defunct Executive Committee. "We now know that a local administration can act to empower the entire community."

The future challenge for UNDP and its trainees is to disseminate their acquired knowledge, so it trickles down to the furthest reaches of public administration and judiciary. The second phase of the judiciary project began in late 1999. Each project—the public administration and the judiciary—will cost $2 million, with the Dutch government contributing $1.4 million and $1.3 million, respectively.

The two-year public administration project will provide training to more local officials and the remaining half of Moldova's districts. It will also include the creation of a Moldovan Association of Municipalities and additional support for the Academy of Public Administration.

Of course, not every Moldovan official can be sent to Western Europe for an internship. And the newly enlightened need the support of their work environment to facilitate change. That is why UNDP's primary goal remains institutional capacity-building.

A day in court.

"You can train people and show them the way it can be done," says UNDP's Tejno. "But when they go back to that cold, dark office in a musty building in some small village, that's where the real work begins. The challenge is how you translate experience and exposure into the local environment and ensure that conditions for positive change are established. If we do not move forward, we might slide backwards." ■

Michael J. Jordan is the Budapest-based correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, Jane's Defence Weekly *and the* Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Empowering Women from the Grassroots Up

By Ranjit Dev Raj

Dehra Dun, India—Nathu Begum's day begins at 4:00 am. "I have to finish the household work early so I don't keep anybody waiting for me at the *panchayat* (village council) office," she says. It is this kind of concern for the public which got Nathu Begum elected as chairperson of the Enfield Grant village panchayat.

Enfield Grant's English-sounding name is due to the fact that it falls in Dehra Dun district, once a British retreat in the Himalayan foothills of northern Uttar Pradesh—India's largest state with a population of 170 million people. Thanks to a 1993 constitutional amendment reserving 33 percent of seats for women in panchayats and other local bodies across India, women in Uttar Pradesh have been gaining new confidence. And nowhere in this state is the change felt more than in the villages of the picturesque Dehra Dun district.

The panchayat is the basic unit of administration with the block and the district forming the next two tiers. All three benefit from the reservation laws. But the panchayat is particularly important because India, as Mahatma Gandhi once said, lives in its villages.

(Top) Nathu Begum examines a sick buffalo as part of her daily rounds. (Below) Women in a literacy class.

Women come to power

Nathu Begum was among a million women across the country who were enabled by the new laws to become grassroots leaders. Initially, men balked at the idea of sharing the panchayat, a traditional male preserve, with women, but they are—according to studies—coming around.

"The hurdles only ensured that really capable women, who could hold their own, got elected," says Manisha Panwar, a young trainer with the Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK) a prominent non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Dehra Dun and supported in part by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The Garhwal region of Uttar Pradesh, in which Dehra Dun falls, is the beneficiary of UNDP's Community-Based Pro-Poor Initiatives (CBPPI) programme, carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. One of the main objectives of the CBPPI is to promote and develop people's participatory institutions such as the *Panchayati Raj* (rule of the village councils).

Building leadership capacity in women is a specific thrust area for UNDP. Approximately US$15 million has been set aside for this purpose in the various programmes and sub-programmes in UNDP's Country Cooperation Framework-I for a period of four years, 1997 to 2001," says Neera Burra, UNDP's Assistant Resident Representative. "The resources are also used in promoting sustainable livelihoods and asset creation at the community level."

Governance at the grassroots

Recognizing RLEK's strengths and experience in the Garhwal region, UNDP is supporting its programmes for women to the tune of $438,580. RLEK has the important task of managing and documenting the programme and reports to the Government of India and UNDP.

According to Avdesh Kaushal, chief of RLEK, their main work has been in training elected women members and chairpersons of the panchayats. "We teach them how to interact with officials and give them an understanding of their rights and duties. They are also taught public speaking and basic planning for development and programme implementation," he said.

"Keeping in mind that a large proportion of the women leaders are illiterate or semi-literate we devised three-day training workshops, which are attended by 450 elected representatives," Kaushal said.

The project also motivates women to participate in the process of elections. Dry runs and mock-ups were a marked feature of this phase and consisted of group singing, street plays and demonstration of the correct use of the paper ballot, the casting of votes and vote tabulation.

In order to tackle the interaction problems that women leaders encountered with officialdom, RLEK held a series

of open fora where the women were encouraged to air their grievances. A session held in March 1999 was attended by 600 women leaders from the Garhwal region who complained about the lack of cooperation by local officials. By June, sweeping amendments to Panchayati Raj laws in the whole of Uttar Pradesh made all village officials firmly answerable to the panchayat and its chairperson.

Firmly in the saddle, women chairpersons rapidly gained the trust of villagers. In Dehra Dun, a sore point has been the carving up of large slices of the salubrious district by "land sharks" for sale to rich city folk from Delhi. "Because I am a woman, people see me as less likely to get involved in corrupt land deals," says Kamla Devi the 30-year-old chairperson of the Merrawalla panchayat. A recent assessment of women in the Panchayati Raj conducted by Professor Susheela Kaushik of the Women's Studies Centre at Delhi University reveals that corruption has gone down and transparency greatly increased because of women's participation in panchayats.

Women resolve local problems

At the Attock Farm panchayat in the Dehra Dun district, villagers no longer run to the police station with their complaints and disputes. Chairperson Pushpa Rana put an end to that by first posting a notice that all conflicts would be resolved at panchayat sittings. And to ensure that it happened, she got local police officials to redirect complainants to the panchayat. As a result, nobody talks of high-handedness or bribery at Attock Farm.

Of Dehra Dun's 119 women chairpersons, 34 are illiterate while another 40 never got beyond the eighth grade—but that is not a serious handicap. Nathu Begum, who once worked as a farm labourer to bring up her seven children, now takes lessons so as to continue where she left off in primary school.

Says Wahid Hussein, a male member of the Enfield Grant panchayat, "Nathu Begum has a knack of carrying everybody along."

"She is doing a great service, considering that she has yet to see any of the honorarium," observes her husband. His only complaint is that Nathu Begum refused to interfere when a piece of the family land was encroached on. "It would have been a misuse of my position," she explains.

In Uttar Pradesh, chairpersons can approve schemes worth $1,500 on their own. Nathu Begum has been able to obtain funds from various existing schemes to build a network of four-foot wide concrete roads and drains in Enfield Grant. "This place used to be a swamp and people used to sink knee-deep in mud during the rainy season. In addition, the water-logging was the cause for many illnesses," she says.

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Rai is a correspondent with the
Service in India.

GOOD GOVERNANCE INDIA

Training session in progress for women leaders.

SOMALIA'S TRANSITION TOWARD STABILITY

By David Gough

Former militiamen training to become policemen at the Mandheera Police School, Northwest Somalia.

"Development is about human beings. They need four things. First is water; second is food; third is health; and fourth is education. Once a human being has water, food and health, he needs to learn about new horizons and unlock new possibilities. And there is a fifth need—peace and order. Without those, none of the four basic ones can be sustained."

— SOMALI ELDER

Hargeisa, Somalia—Two small boys darted out from behind the ruined building and sprinted barefoot across the dusty street before taking up positions on either side of a derelict fountain. At intervals, a cautious head would reappear as the boys traded fire from the toy guns fashioned out of sticks that each held tightly in his hand.

But their raucous imitations of gunfire were suddenly interrupted by an old man who hobbled out from behind the counter of his shop waving a stick in the air and shouting at the boys in Somali. "He is telling them to stop," said the young man drinking coffee at the next table. "He says that guns do not belong here anymore. We have chosen peace not war."

That is a common sentiment these days in Somalia, where across the breadth and length of the country people are crying out for peace. "It's time to reject conflict," the voices say, "let's have reconciliation and development instead." But for the people of this proud nation, ripped apart by more than a decade of civil war, the obstacles ahead are formidable. Parts of the country remain embroiled in factionalism and chaos; others are in transition between crisis and recovery, while some areas—particularly the self-declared republics of Northeast Somalia/Puntland and Northwest Somalia/Somaliland in the north of the country—have secured peace, stability and social and economic recovery.

Where there is peace, there is reconciliation and the first tentative buds of development are beginning to show. The region of Northwest Somalia/Somaliland enjoys a peace that its embryonic administration is trying to cement with the aid of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), together with other agencies of the United Nations system and other international partners.

"There's not much development activity that we can do in some parts of Somalia given the instability, but here in the north the situation is different," said Moe Hussein, UNDP's Field Emergency Officer. "The greater the degree of stability any particular area has, the more extensive our recovery projects can be."

UNDP's programmes cover many parts of Somalia, although much of its activities revolve around Northwest Somalia/Somaliland, which receives approximately 40 percent of UNDP's US$36 million four-year budget (1997-2000) for Somalia. UNDP's mission is being met by two complementary initiatives: A Civil Protection Programme, which essentially serves to protect the peace, and a Civic Education for Peace Programme, which serves to build on that peace. UNDP recently formulated a plan to support the Civil Protection Programme that is designed to encourage good governance by focusing on legal reform, the judiciary, human rights, law enforcement and mine action.

Demobilizing the militias

A senior member of one of Somalia's clan-based militias says he does not know how many people he killed, but he admits to seeing a lot of violence. "Looting and killing—that was the way of life. Everybody went with their clan and I went with mine."

There was no command structure in his militia and the only currency was the nozzle of a gun. Vehicles that passed through the territory controlled by his militia were routinely stopped and ransacked.

Money changers service Hargeisa's central market. Ruined buildings in the background are a reminder that the new city of Hargeisa has grown out of the ashes of its former self.

GOOD GOVERNANCE SOMALIA

But all that has changed said the young man, who is now a recruit at the Mandheera Police School, which is part of a project to demobilize the militia in Northwest Somalia by integrating some of its members into the police force. The school, which was inaugurated in 1998, has trained policemen who now help to guarantee law and order in this part of Somalia. Recruits at the school, located 120 kilometres northeast of the regional capital, Hargeisa, undergo a rigorous training programme that lasts three months. It provides social education as well as basic training.

Nur Ahmed Yusuf, the training school's commanding officer, told CHOICES that although the school serves primarily as a demobilization and police training centre, he prefers to use the term *dib-u-dajiyo*—or rehumanization. "These men would have robbed their own mothers when they were in the militias. Now peace has given them a second chance in life," he says.

Teaching the recruits to understand and respect human rights is one of the key functions of the project, which is funded by UNDP with the support of a number of donors and local authorities. So far 500 recruits have graduated and another 200 are in training.

"If Somalis are to avoid sliding back into the downward spiral of violence and abuse of law that has prevailed in this country for so long, we have to teach them to respect their neighbour," said Yusuf. "Law and order are the backbone of what we are trying to achieve here. If we have no order, then we have no society."

"In parts of the country, the Somali crisis, in essence, reflects a lack of effective governance. The Somali people cannot participate freely in exercising their right to select representative authorities and hold them accountable for their performance. Unfortunately the conflict and fragmentation prevalent in Somalia is becoming all too common in other parts of the world. In that sense, the efforts of the Somalis themselves and the response of the international community will yield valuable lessons for the future of global action," says Randolph Kent, UNDP's Resident Representative in Somalia.

Reaching the people

It is late afternoon and most men in the northern city of Hargeisa have left their place of work and are sitting cross-legged at home or at a meeting place, in a coffee shop, or on a street corner, chewing *khat*—the mildly narcotic leaf that is used by Somali men. In contrast, Abdi Ibrahim, project officer for UNDP's Civic Education for Peace Programme, is sitting on an uncomfortable wooden chair in a corner of his office poring over the pile of papers that clutter his desk. He is preparing for his job in the field for the next day.

As part of UNDP's contribution to building a stable society, Ibrahim oversees the production of a radio soap opera entitled *Geedka Nabada*, which means the tree of peace. The 15-minute show airs three times a week. It tackles issues such as health, education and civic responsibility and commands a loyal following. It is broadcast by Radio Djibouti, Radio Hargeisa and Radio Galkayo, and reaches most corners of the country.

The topics of discussion played out in the drama become at times more challenging—female genital mutilation and sexually-transmitted diseases, for example. And women are encouraged to play a more decisive role in society in contrast to the traditional patriarchal structure of Somali society. But while challenging some societal norms, the programme takes advantage of others. "Somali society is very oral," says Ibrahim, "and radio is very influential here. It's not uncommon to see 100 people listening to one radio set. With more than 60 percent of the population illiterate, radio is the most effective medium to reach people."

One middle-aged woman said that the programme had helped her explain to her elderly mother why she did not want to circumcize her young daughter. "According to our culture, all Somali women should be circumcised," said the woman, "But I regret what was done to me, and I didn't want my daughter to go through the same pain. By asking my mother to listen to the issues on the radio, I was able to persuade her that we should leave that practice behind us."

Helping in economic recovery

Reconciliation and governance aside, one of UNDP's main priorities in Somalia is to create a good environment for economic recovery. With the longest coastline in Africa, maritime activity has been the mainstay of the Somali economy. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), with the financial backing of UNDP, is supporting the rehabilitation of two of the major ports of Northern Somalia. UNDP is funding most of the activities of the UNCTAD project and the vocational training.

Northwestern Somalia's pre-eminent port is Berbera and Benoni Parsons is UNCTAD's Ports Management Specialist in Berbera, which fell into almost total disuse during the civil war. He oversees vocational training programmes for employees, from labourers to architects, and reports a dramatic increase in the number of qualified personnel now working at the facility. "We have provided high standards of training programmes which cover the whole management of the port from start to finish." Moreover, diplomas awarded by the UNCTAD school are highly regarded by the private sector, which is now employing many of the school's graduates.

One year ago Mohamed Jibril was unemployed and his family, recently returned from a refugee camp in neighbouring Ethiopia, was destitute. But since completing an UNCTAD training programme, he has become a watch operator. "Life was very hard before this job," he said. "I was forced to do some desperate things for money—now I just have to use the skills I have learnt, learn more skills, and maybe one day I'll become the director of the port." ■

David Gough is the East Africa correspondent for The Guardian.

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ENDING HUNGER
TAKE ACTION
www.netaid.org
What do you call
40 million hits from 160 countries on the NetAid web site, 2000 non-profit organizations joining up with NetAid, and the largest broadcast of an event ever...
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It began with a simple mouse click from world leaders on four continents. It won't end until extreme poverty disappears from the earth.
The NetAid concerts were just the start of a long-term global effort that unites the power of the Internet and the arts, with people and organizations around the world dedicated to ending hunger, helping refugees, saving the environment, securing human rights and relieving third world debt.
To the world leaders and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan... to the artists and producers who made the NetAid concerts possible... to the 100,000 fans who came to the shows... to the donors who have already contributed over $12 million... to the people who watched the record 2.4 million live internet streams... to the millions who logged on to the NetAid web site... and to the hundreds of millions more around the world who experienced NetAid on TV and radio...
Thank you.
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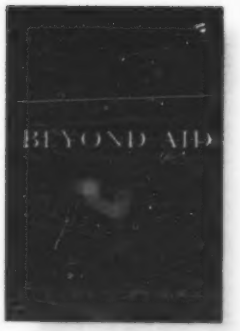
NOTEBOOK

BEYOND AID: FROM PATRONAGE TO PARTNERSHIP



After 50 years of development assistance, and the expenditure of one trillion dollars worth of resources, it is time to take stock, says author Stephen Browne in his new book *Beyond Aid: From Patronage to Partnership*.

Aid is in decline, and inherited debt obligations threaten to permanently reverse the direction of resource flows. There is a convergence of objectives towards donor self interest, and a growing sense that much aid has been developmentally ineffective, in particular because it cannot adequately compensate for—and may even contribute to—institutional and policy deficiencies. Moreover, aid in its traditional guises is less appreciated by recipient countries. Some have moved beyond charity status, and can obtain capital assistance from private sources.

In an original analysis of today's development problems, Browne proposes an end to patronage. The alternative is the strengthening of partnerships based on accelerated debt relief, more trade liberalization, expanded regional cooperation, the spread of the information revolution and reform of the global institutions that govern international finance and development.

In the publication's preface, Sir Hans Singer, Professor, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, says, "This book is an attempt to go 'beyond aid' by an author well qualified both by previous research and practical experience."

Says Dr. Elizabeth Durbin, Professor of Economics and Public Administration, New York University, "This is an essential book for all those committed to the future growth of developing countries, and to rethinking the appropriate roles for the United Nations and its agencies to complement the global market system in this process..." ■

The author, Stephen Browne, is the Senior Advisor on Poverty and Director, Social Development and Poverty Elimination Division, UNDP.

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THE LINK BETWEEN DEBT AND DEVELOPMENT

The Human Development Report 1999 states that "for several years most commentators have agreed that the debt of [heavily indebted poor] countries is excessive and unpayable...yet the actions have so far been minute in relation to the needs." *Debt and Sustainable Human Development*, a new publication by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), takes up this issue and explores the link between debt and development, offering recommendations on how the organization can help these particularly vulnerable countries.

Heavily indebted poor countries face higher rates of malnutrition, infant mortality, disease and illiteracy than other countries in the developing world. African governments spend an average of four times more in debt repayments to northern creditors than they spend on health and education. In the Philippines, 7.7 percent of the national budget is allocated to basic social services, compared with 30.7 percent allocated to debt service. Other countries with similar ratios include Brazil, Cameroon, Jamaica and Zambia.

It is now well established that debt is incompatible with, and in fact deleterious to, human development. The central message of *Debt and Sustainable Human Development* is that the current levels of debt among heavily indebted poor countries have severe negative consequences for human development, because external debt servicing requirements limit the resources available for investments in human development and discourage economic growth.

This publication provides an overview of existing mechanisms for debt restructuring, explores how to build capacity for effective debt management and clearly puts forth UNDP's position on debt. It also maintains that existing debt relief mechanisms, including the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative launched in 1996 by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, address the problem inadequately—there is too little debt relief, available to too few countries and at too slow a pace. The report stresses that because HIPC is macroeconomics-driven, it does not take into account social and human development objectives.

The report thus advocates the need for more debt relief in addition to that offered by the HIPC Initiative. It recommends that additional relief be used to promote and pursue social development goals. In this context, it proposes the establishment of National Partnership Facilities, new financial mechanisms at the national level that will channel resources made available from debt relief initiatives to social and human development programmes.

Debt and Sustainable Human Development reiterates the call on creditor countries to demonstrate political leadership by making greater debt relief available. It also warns that this should not be done at the expense of aid resources that are usually allocated to poor countries. In conclusion, it recommends that UNDP continue its support of client country efforts to strengthen debt management. ■

By Linda Maguire, Adviser, Management Development and Governance Division, UNDP.

Debt and Sustainable Human Development

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POVERTY: DERIVING LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

For policymakers to daily practitioners, the upcoming release of *Overcoming Human Poverty 2000* promises a wealth of information. The second in a series published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the report focuses on how the organization is assisting developing country governments to analyze the problems created by poverty and to design poverty-reduction strategies.

This publication, produced by UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy, draws on 23 national anti-poverty plan assessments. It also benefits from considerable input about national anti-poverty programmes and activities provided by UNDP's extensive network of country offices. Statistical data on the incidence of poverty around the world supplement the report's material on best practices.

Many key messages

Poverty is a continuing and growing scourge worldwide. Practically no country is spared. Even those that have made good progress in reducing poverty levels—such as China and the countries of Southeast Asia—have suffered setbacks, partly as a result of the financial crises of 1997-1998. In many other countries—particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa—there has been no progress at all in poverty reduction. Worldwide, the numbers in chronic poverty are over 1.3 billion.

Overcoming Human Poverty 2000 makes the case that political and economic governance is critical to poverty eradication. Resources designated for the poor and policies that are designed to reduce poverty are falling short of their intent. To be effective, anti-poverty strategies need to take account of the complexity and causes of poverty, so that governments may develop practical and achievable targets for poverty reduction.

The report's authors find, for example, that inequality generates poverty and minimizes the impact of any poverty-reduction activities. Too often the primary sources of inequality, such as the distribution of land, are left untouched because they are politically sensitive issues. These issues must be seriously addressed.

The report also focuses on administrative decentralization as another important governance dimension. But its authors are very clear in stating that only decentralization that "empowers" people will have a sustainable impact.

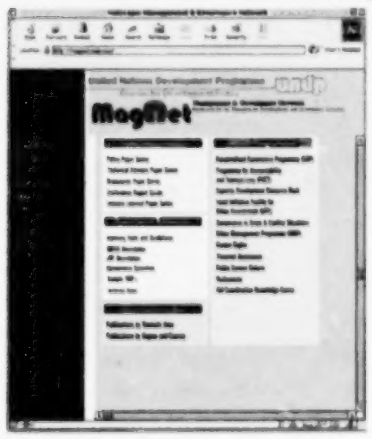
Resources generally do not flow to the powerless. Too often they disappear long before any poor people come into the picture. This scenario begins to change when poor people start to organize themselves through civil society organizations. Once organized, the voices of the poor can begin to exert some influence on national policies, local government and even donor activity in their communities. When such organizations join hands with accountable local government, they have the potential to be a true fighting force in the battle against poverty.

MAGNET: AN E-GOVERNANCE GATEWAY TO KNOWLEDGE

MagNet, the website of the Management Development and Governance Division of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is a virtual library of the organization's governance work.

Since 1997, it has been disseminating globally UNDP's experience and knowledge in all areas of governance: from parliamentary strengthening and human rights to public sector reform, decentralization, urban development and accountability. All publications and documents are full-text, some in two or three languages, and all can be downloaded free of charge. A search engine helps to find the required information.

MagNet is continually updated to reflect the latest thinking and international best practice in all operational and policy domains on governance. Publications include policy documents, technical notes, discussion papers, and conference reports. Other governance tools and resources include newsletters, training modules, country case studies, research findings, evaluation reports, upcoming events, and speeches by UNDP senior officials.



The website also provides a gateway to resources of other UN and external organizations that are championing governance activities at the national, regional or global levels. MagNet links to over 800 websites through an interactive index that is categorized by governance themes. It also hosts discussion lists, engaging governance practitioners and professionals worldwide through on-line exchanges.

By visiting MagNet at **http://magnet.undp.org** you can now download the first release of UNDP's software programme, CAPBUILD, to design and prepare institution-building programmes. ■

Jose Cruz-Osorio is Technical Advisor, Management Development and Governance Division, UNDP.

AFRICA WEBSITE CONNECTS WITH USERS

There is nothing simple about efforts to widen Internet access to sub-Saharan Africa, which continues to fall behind in the use of information-age technology; yet there is nothing complicated about using UNDP Africa, a website created by the Regional Bureau for Africa at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Intended as a user-friendly interface with UNDP's partners, a group that includes private businesses, non-governmental organizations, government officials, and the development community, the website (**www.undp.org/rba**), has emerged as an important vehicle for improving the lines of communications between various constituencies.

The problem remains, however, that there are still far too few lines of communication that carry full Internet access to African countries, and for those places where access exists, it is expensive. Yet despite the obstacles, the site, according to its webmaster, Charles Ariyibi, is attracting business people and academics looking for answers on a round-the-clock basis.

Opening with a screen depicting sunlight filtering down to focus on a map of Africa, the website offers greetings in over a dozen African languages, which Ariyibi says reflects the

Scheduled for end-March 2000 release, *Overcoming Human Poverty 2000* is timely. It will be part of UNDP's contribution to the preparations for the special session of the UN General Assembly to be held in June to consider the progress made by countries towards meeting the goals of the World Summit on Social Development.

It is also well timed because UNDP is helping the heavily indebted poor countries to draw up "poverty-reduction strategy papers" in order to fulfil conditions to qualify for external debt relief set by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

There is a lot at stake. The debt forgiveness agreed to could benefit individual countries to the tune of tens of millions of dollars almost immediately. ■

By Stephen Browne, Senior Advisor on Poverty and Director, Social Development and Poverty Elimination Division, UNDP.

importance of welcome in most African traditions.

From the opening page, the user can find information on the bureau, the UN system's Special Initiative on Africa, and ongoing activities, as well as retrieve documentation on UNDP's programme framework for each country. Links are provided to UNDP country offices, where users may direct specific inquiries. Some of these offices—including those in Benin, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritius and the Seychelles—maintain their own websites, which provide more in-depth information about programmes in their countries.

A new addition to the website is the Private Sector page, which supports efforts to encourage business, trade and investment in Africa.

Ariyibi says the site provides information on major new initiatives, such as a meeting in Cotonou, Benin, last year, where UNDP representatives pledged to refocus their efforts to pursue the most effective projects in the light of budget cuts that have affected the organization.

The Africa web page is attractive and easy to use. According to Ariyibi, the site provides a framework for future plans, on which the bureau intends to post substantially more documentation. One drawback is that much of the documentation is written in what is generally considered heavy-handed United Nations "official language."

Still, the site offers an interesting window on UNDP's work in Africa, and as more country offices in Africa get online, the site has the potential for offering a treasure-trove of information. ■

By Daniel Shepard, a freelance journalist who reports on the environment, human rights, development and the United Nations.

PUBLICATIONS

Participatory Local Governance

Good governance is widely recognized as the key to human development. Yet few things are more sensitive—or challenging—than improving governance and helping countries manage development in a changing world. This UNDP technical advisory paper analyzes the processes, methods and experience of participatory local governance as demonstrated by the Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment, a global programme launched at the Earth Summit in 1992. It shares insights from actors, such as local authorities, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in improving the living conditions in low-income countries around the world.

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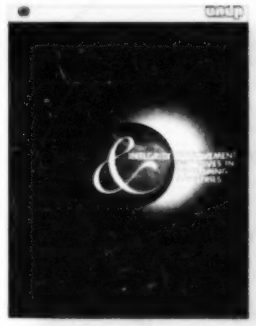

Corruption and Integrity Improvement Initiatives in Developing Countries

This publication compiles the views of eminent thinkers and practitioners on how to reduce and eliminate corruption. The book shows that, while helpful, democracy is by no means a cure for corruption, nor is economic liberalization a panacea for ending public sector crime. The contributors call for strategies that combine law enforcement, prevention through institutional reforms and public support. A strong correlation between successful anti-corruption programmes and civil liberties is demonstrated throughout the book.

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Capacity Assessment and Development in a Systems and Strategic Management Context

Development practitioners are giving increasing attention to the issue of sustainability in development. Central to this concept is the issue of developing national capabilities that endure beyond the phase of assistance. This technical advisory paper focuses on assessing capacity development requirements and then planning for them in a manner that is sustainable. The concept of capacity development is applied in a comprehensive and integrative manner, where the varying levels of the public, private and civil society sectors must support each other for the achievement of national development objectives and lasting results. The guidelines presented in this paper can be tailored to a wide variety of situations, and are designed to be used in conjunction with UNDP's programme approach.

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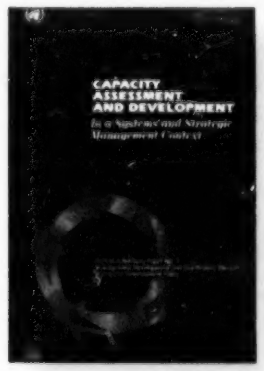

MATTERS OF FACT

Information is drawn from various editions of the *Human Development Report*, commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. The report is published in English by Oxford University Press, and in nine other language editions by a variety of publishers.

Governance. More than 70% of the world's people live under relatively **democratic regimes.** › In Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, almost all the countries have held multiparty elections since 1990. › In South Asia, 15 parliamentary elections have taken place in the last decade. In Latin America and the Caribbean nearly 90 **general elections** were held between 1987 and 1997. Thirty-eight of the 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa held legislative elections between 1990 and 1994. › In Malawi after the 1994 **shift to democracy,** the government introduced free primary education, which increased enrolment from 53% to 76%. › So far, 144 countries have **ratified** the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. › Many countries have taken steps to increase **women's participation** in economic and political arenas. Political parties in 34 countries have binding quotas for women in **governing bodies** and in legislative elections. Argentina's electoral law established a quota of 30% for female candidates for **elective posts** in 1991. › The Philippines' constitution of 1987 established a combined quota of 20% for **women** and indigenous peoples. Thailand set specific goals in 1985 for women's participation in many areas: 30% in local development committees and administration as well as at national executive and policy-making levels. Viet Nam has established a target of 20% for **women's representation** in popularly elected bodies, 10% at different levels of administration and 15-20% in party executive committees. › India has reserved 30% of elected positions in *panchayats* (local councils) for women.